

INSANE PERSONS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, ETC.

FEBRUARY 29, 1904.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. DILLINGHAM, from the Committee on the District of Columbia,
submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 8692.]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8692) to authorize the apprehension and detention of insane persons in the District of Columbia, and providing for their temporary commitment in the Government Hospital for the Insane, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report thereon with a recommendation that it pass.

The bill was prepared by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and has their approval, as will appear by the following letter:

OFFICE COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
Washington, January 2, 1903.

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to transmit herewith a draft of a bill "to authorize the apprehension and detention of insane persons in the District of Columbia, and providing for their temporary commitment in the Government Hospital for the Insane, and for other purposes," and to recommend the early enactment of the proposed measure. This draft was prepared by the corporation counsel, and embodies the views of the health officer, the secretary of the Board of Charities, and the sanitary officer of the Metropolitan Police Department, who has charge of the persons of the classes mentioned in the bill pending the action of the courts in regard to them or their temporary transfer to the Government Hospital for the Insane.

Very respectfully,

HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND,
President Board of Commissioners District of Columbia.

Hon. J. H. GALLINGER,
Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia, Senate.

The method pursued by the District government for the apprehension, detention, and temporary commitment of alleged insane persons is explained by Corporation Counsel Duvall, who says:

When an alleged insane person is taken into custody by a policeman he is thereupon taken to one of the station houses. Then communication is had with police headquarters, and the major and superintendent of police, through one of his assistants in charge of such cases, immediately sends two physicians, usually police surgeons, to the station house where such party is detained; and after examination made

by the physicians if they are of the opinion that such party is not mentally unsound he is allowed to go at liberty, but if the physicians are of the opinion that such party is mentally unsound and should have treatment they make certificates to that effect and file the same at police headquarters.

In addition to the certificates from the physicians, the officer in charge at police headquarters requires an affidavit from a resident of the District certifying as to the length of time he has known such party; that such party, in his judgment, is of unsound mind, etc., and is in need of medical treatment. Thereupon the case is called to the Commissioners' attention, and they make a written request to the superintendent of the Government Hospital for the Insane, and accompany the same by the aforementioned certificates and affidavit, for the detention and treatment of such person in that institution pending a formal adjudication of the question of the party's mental condition by a jury.

The average time of such temporary detention before a hearing can be had before a jury is about ten days to two weeks, and if in the meantime such person recovers his mental condition so that it will be safe for the public or himself to go at liberty the Superintendent of the Hospital for the Insane communicates that fact to the officer in charge of such cases and he is thereupon ordered to release such party.

The bill (S. 2880, 58th Cong., 2d sess.) now under your consideration gives legal warrant for the procedure which has been adopted without such authority.

